

How Can We Improve AT Reuse?

Under the *Assistive Technology Act*, the Rehabilitation Services Administration—a component of OSERS—funds a statewide AT program in each of the 50 states and six territories, and the majority of these programs support AT device reuse activities. To find the program in your state, visit the following Web site: www.resna.org/taproject/at/statecontacts.html.

Information and materials from the national conference on AT Reuse are accessible at www.resna.org/atreuse. To support ideas generated by the conference, OSERS is funding a national coordination center to provide technical assistance and networking opportunities for state agencies and other entities that are awarded grants to support AT reuse.

For more information on AT reuse contact:

Jeremy Buzzell

Rehabilitation Services Administration

202-245-7319

Jeremy.Buzzell@ed.gov



RECYCLE YOUR AT

Recycling
and reuse
of assistive
technology makes
common sense.

NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE REUSE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

What Is AT Reuse?

For many people with disabilities, assistive technology (AT) is an essential support to daily living. A person may depend on a wheelchair, walker, special computer keyboard, speech generating device or other AT device at home, at school or at work. Finding ways to make AT more available is something with which few could argue.

Over many years, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has supported research in assistive technology, as well as making AT more available to people with disabilities. More recently, OSERS has supported a number of activities to encourage and support AT reuse under the *Assistive Technology Act*. OSERS is now taking the lead on a national level to promote and encourage AT reuse through its sponsorship of a national conference on this issue, as well as through grants to state agencies, non-profit organizations and other entities to support AT reuse (see www.resna.org/atreuse for grant information).

Reuse of AT is emerging as one of the ways to make AT more available. To the extent that AT reuse is practiced today, it is generally done through:

- ▶ **Device exchange programs** in which a “seller” and a “buyer” are connected directly with each other, as with classified ads;
- ▶ **Device recycling programs** in which an organization accepts donated AT items and stores them until new owners are found; or
- ▶ **Device refurbishment programs**, which are similar to device recycling, except that the programs provide the additional service of fixing or customizing used AT devices before the new owner receives them.

Why Reuse AT?

Recycling and reuse of assistive technology makes common sense.

Many people can't get the AT they need because they can't afford new devices and can't get funding from private insurance or federal, state or local sources. People in need of AT may turn to AT reuse programs because these programs often do not have eligibility requirements. In addition, used AT is generally more affordable, if not free.

Others may choose used AT because they do not want to invest in new devices if they will be needed for only a short time.

AT reuse also benefits those giving away the AT. Passing on used devices means no longer needing to store them and sparing the environment the impact of throwing them away. In addition, those who donate AT know they are helping people in need.



Who Is Involved in AT Reuse?

Hundreds of organizations around the country, large and small, are involved in AT reuse. From state agencies, to nonprofits, to hospitals, to churches, there are AT reuse programs in all parts of the country that meet all kinds of needs.

Unfortunately, there is little promotion, coordination or networking of and among these programs to ensure an efficient and effective system for getting used AT into the hands of those who need it.